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**GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES SETTLEMENT OF HEALTH CARE FRAUD CASE**

**(SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS)** United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that a lawsuit against a San Antonio physician, Dr. **NAJAH AL-SHALCHI** and his son, **HARETH AL-SHALCHI**, was settled by the defendants agreeing to pay approximately \$563,000.

The case alleges that the defendants presented hundreds of false claims for reimbursement to the Medicare program. The suit alleged that bills were submitted for reimbursement of critical care services provided to Medicare beneficiaries who were allegedly treated in the hospital by Dr. Al Shalchi. Several Medicare beneficiaries contacted the Medicare claims processor on its complaint "hotline" to report that they were being billed for services provided by Dr. Al Shalchi even though they were not in the hospital at the time the services were allegedly rendered. These reports triggered an investigation which formed the basis of the government's lawsuit.

Assistant United States Attorney Harold Brown, representing the United States, explained that the "hotline" calls were very important to the case. "Patients and their families should always review their Medicare payment notices for accuracy. Even if you are not sure whether there is a problem, it is best to report the matter and let the Medicare claims processor review your report." The reports triggered an investigation, which ultimately lead to the filing of the lawsuit.

Under the terms of the settlement, Dr. Al Shalchi, who denied the allegations in the lawsuit and fully cooperated with the investigation, agreed to pay a total of \$563,000, plus interest. Dr. Al Shalchi also agreed to implement improved billing and auditing practices and report compliance with these practices to the OIG. The settlement also provided that Dr. Al Shalchi's son, Hareth, was barred from participating in federal health care programs for a period of ten years.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, with assistance from Trailblazer Health Enterprises, the Medicare claims processor for Texas.

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